

11th January 1921.

All communications should be addressed to
THE SECRETARY.

SIR,

**BOARD OF EDUCATION,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.**

With reference to Circular 1185 of 17th December 1920, I am directed by the Board of Education to indicate the general lines on which they will conduct their administration under the present financial conditions.

1. General Schemes under the Education Act, 1918.—It is very desirable that Local Education Authorities should continue to prepare and submit for criticism and discussion general schemes for the organisation and development of education in their areas. This procedure will not only make it easier for Local Education Authorities to resume the development of the public system of education, including the establishment of a system of Continuation Schools, when financial conditions are more favourable, but will also, even in present circumstances, be conducive to economy and to prudent administration. It is not favourable to economy that any Local Education Authority should conduct its business "from hand to mouth" and embark on particular improvements without considering what they will lead to, what other improvements are required, and what should be the order of priority. The preparation of schemes embodying a policy for gradual execution will enable Local Authorities and their constituents to see what is in front of them, and the Board's consideration of specific proposals for giving effect to the Authority's policy, when financial circumstances permit (observing a due order of priority as between different parts or items of the scheme), will be greatly facilitated.

2. It must, however, be clearly understood that for the present the Board's approval to any general scheme cannot be given in such a form as would commit them to recognising, for the calculation of substantive or deficiency grant, expenditure incurred under it. Proposals for giving effect to those parts of the scheme which owing to local circumstances are of special urgency must therefore be submitted to the Board as specific and particular proposals with full estimates of the expenditure involved.

3. Ordinary Services of Public Education.—While it is the view of the Government that the strictest economy must for the present be exercised in the administration of the public system of education, it is incumbent on them to avoid the imposition of restrictions which would tend to prejudice its efficiency. Large arrears in such matters as staffing, repairs, ordinary equipment and special equipment for practical instruction, and the supply of books, still have to be overtaken. The ordinary educational services must be carried on effectively and room

must be left for making provision for the actual or prospective growth of those services. Timely action to meet inevitable demands for the augmentation of existing educational facilities is indeed an element in a prudent and economical policy.

4. It is not possible, however, to state in the form of rules or definitions the manner in which the Board of Education will conduct their administration in giving effect to the intentions of the Government. It is therefore inevitable that for some time to come the Board should confine themselves to the consideration of particular needs, and before approving specific proposals on their merits should satisfy themselves not only that they are proper and desirable in themselves but also that they should not be postponed. The Board will endeavour to expedite their decisions as much as possible, both on the proposals which are already before them and on any new proposals which may be submitted. It is essential, however, that in all cases full information should be furnished as to the cost of the proposals and the grounds on which it is necessary to carry them out, and information already given may have to be supplemented. Where proposals have already been sanctioned but have not yet been carried out, the Board must ask that before the Authorities commit themselves to new expenditure on their execution (*e.g.*, by placing contracts for building work) the proposals should again be referred to this Office. Delay will be avoided if such references are made through and after consultation with H.M. Inspector.

5. It of course remains the duty of the Board to see that the ordinary educational services are carried on effectively and in such a manner as to justify the expenditure of public funds upon them and to yield a fair return for that expenditure. If a Local Education Authority fails on its own initiative to take the necessary action to remedy conditions which bring the schools or their system below a tolerable standard of efficiency, particularly in respect of adequacy of accommodation, staffing or attention to the physical condition of the children, the Board cannot hesitate to make and insist upon their own requirements.

6. **Building Work.**—It is obviously undesirable at the present moment that Local Authorities should embark on or proceed to the erection of large or costly permanent buildings unless the circumstances are extraordinary and such a course is unavoidable. Few proposals of this character have in fact been submitted to the Board within the last twelve months, and they cannot now entertain them unless a case is made out for their exceptional consideration. To meet a deficiency of school places, or to remedy conditions prejudicial to the health of the scholars, or inconsistent with their efficient instruction, recourse should be had in the first instance to the adaptation and extension of existing school buildings, preferably by means of temporary structures or army huts. Where it is not possible

by these means to provide accommodation for children who are by law required to attend school, or to find room in secondary schools or other institutions of higher education for children and young persons who are qualified to profit by courses of higher education and are asking for admission, the erection of new buildings may be imperative. In these cases the simplest form of construction should be adopted, and in their planning everything which is not essential for the efficient instruction of the scholars should be postponed, buildings being planned so as to permit of their subsequent extension and the easy incorporation in them of additional rooms, so that ultimately a higher standard of efficiency, comfort and convenience may be attained.

7. Acquisition of Sites and Purchase of existing Buildings.—The Board recognise that in view of the growth of population in particular districts (*e.g.*, in connection with housing schemes), the acquisition of sites for new schools and playing fields is a measure of prudence. Similarly in some cases where the position or condition of existing school buildings is so unsatisfactory that their replacement by new buildings as soon as circumstances permit is inevitable, the acquisition of sites with a view to the future erection of new buildings is desirable. In considering proposals for this purpose the question whether better and cheaper sites can be secured by taking immediate action than by postponing action is obviously of the first importance.

8. In some cases, necessary extensions or improvements of school accommodation can be more cheaply effected by the purchase or hire of existing buildings than by the erection of new buildings. Where an opportunity is presented of acquiring existing buildings at a moderate cost (including ultimate cost of adaptation), special consideration will be given to proposals for purchase. It must be understood, however, that unless the provision of additional effective accommodation is urgent, the question of immediate expenditure on the adaptation or extension of purchased buildings must be separately submitted.

9. Teachers' Salaries.—The attitude of the Board towards the Reports of the Standing Joint Committee on the Salaries of Teachers in Public Elementary Schools is indicated in the letter addressed by the President of the Board to Lord Burnham on 24th December 1920. It will be understood that if the Local Education Authority take action in anticipation of the Board's decision, they cannot assume that any additional expenditure involved will be recognised by the Board for the calculation of grant.

As regards expenditure on salaries of teachers in secondary schools and other institutions of higher education, I am to point out that the Board aim at paying grant at the rate of 50 per cent. of the Authority's net expenditure in the year in which

the expenditure is incurred. It is not possible for the Board to make provision for this purpose unless they have notice, before their estimates for a financial year are framed, of any considerable increases which are to take effect during the year. The Board cannot commit themselves to recognising, for the calculation of grant in the coming and subsequent financial years, expenditure incurred on a basis higher than that recommended in their Report of 1st October 1920 by the Standing Joint Committee, or additional expenditure involved by a "carry-over" effected in a less period than three financial years.

10. Nursery Schools.—The Board cannot for the present entertain proposals for the establishment of Nursery Schools except in special circumstances and on an experimental basis, where existing buildings are available.

11. Central Schools.—Where Central Elementary Schools can be established by the use of existing school buildings, and by their inexpensive adaptation or extension for the use of older scholars and for practical instruction, specific proposals will be considered on their merits. There may be cases in which the erection of new buildings is necessary to supply a deficiency of accommodation in ordinary Public Elementary Schools, and where the most convenient manner of organising Elementary Education in the district will then be the use of a new building as a Central School. Proposals of this kind will also be entertained by the Board.

12. Continuation Schools.—For the present the Board must postpone entertaining new applications for fixing appointed days for the purposes of Section 10 of the Education Act, 1918.

13. Secondary Schools.—The Board recognise that the pressure on the accommodation of Secondary Schools arising from a wider appreciation of the advantages of Secondary Education is serious, and the rise in the average period of school life, consequent on the undertakings of parents to keep their children at school till 16, is increasing that pressure. More room also must be found in Secondary Schools for intending teachers if the development of the supply is not to be checked, particularly in certain areas.

Proposals for increasing the accommodation in Secondary Schools to meet actual or imminent demands for admission will be considered on their merits, subject to the general conditions laid down in paragraphs 6 and 7 as regards buildings.

The Board recognise that in view of the increased cost of secondary education tuition fees may have to be increased. At the same time, the need for safeguarding the interests of the children of parents of limited means may require that the Authority should give new or additional aid to schools. Proposals for increased provision of free places or of maintenance allowances will be considered on their merits.

14. **Supply of Teachers.**—The Board regard plans for improving and securing continuity of the supply of teachers and the preparation of young persons for the teaching profession as of great importance, and proposals for this purpose, whether by way of the provision of maintenance allowances, or the extension of Secondary Schools, or the establishment of Pupil Teacher Centres to supplement them, or the augmentation of facilities for training, will receive special consideration.

15. **Technical Schools.**—Schemes for the erection of large new Technical Institutions must be postponed for the present, but particular proposals for minor extensions and improvements to meet the demands of students will be considered on their merits.

16. **School Medical Service, Special Schools, &c.**—In accordance with the principle indicated in paragraph 3 of this Circular, the effective maintenance of the School Medical Service is necessary, and the Board will entertain proposals for its gradual improvement and its extension to Secondary Schools and other places of higher education. As far as possible, however, the erection of new buildings must be avoided.

As regards the care of the various types of defective children, arrangements for the "ascertainment" of these children should be completed, but proposals for making further school provision for them will require special scrutiny in view of the high cost of such provision.

17. It will be understood that in paragraphs 6 to 16 of this Circular, the Board have selected only certain features of the educational system for comment, by way of illustration of their general attitude, and have not attempted to deal exhaustively with all the questions which will arise for consideration by the Local Education Authorities and the Board. The Board rely confidently on Local Education Authorities to co-operate with them, in the difficult circumstances of the present time, in devising means for carrying on the public system of education with the strictest economy, and at the same time in such a manner as to protect the vital interests which it serves and to keep open the lines of advance when financial circumstances are more favourable.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

L. A. Selby-Bigge

